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Commission on the Status of Women
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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

Statement submitted by World Youth Alliance, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

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Please recycle

Statement

Critical issues facing women and girls, and, by extension their families, communities, regions and the world, are outlined below. We must redouble our efforts to demonstrate in practical terms the respect we have for the dignity of each person, by working to protect and support women in the unique difficulties they face around the world.

Health

A significant health risk women in developing countries face is death due to complications from childbirth. According to the World Health Organization, the vast majority of these deaths are preventable. Mothers, as caretakers, educators and providers, are often at the centre of their communities. A mother dying in childbirth increases the baby's rate of morbidity and mortality. Motherless children are at much greater risk of death than those with living parents, owing to loss of income and care. Motherless children are also much less likely to receive complete schooling and adequate nutrition. When a mother dies, children tend to enter the workforce at a young age, leading to health and social problems. Maternal death also has an immediate, direct economic impact on families.

The Beijing Platform for Action called for the reduction of maternal mortality by 50 per cent by 2000 and another half by 2015; unfortunately, these goals will not be met. Maternal deaths were reduced by almost 50 per cent between 1990 and 2013. However, numbers held between 2010 (287,000) and 2013 (289,000). The maternal mortality rate in developing countries is still too high, at 230 per 100,000 live births, compared to 16 in developed regions. There are success stories, from reports of zero maternal deaths in rural villages in Tanzania to Chile's achievement of the lowest maternal mortality ratio in Latin America, thanks to a combination of economic growth, compulsory education laws, free maternal and child health care, and improvements in sanitation and nutrition.

The direct interventions needed to help every woman and baby safely through pregnancy and childbirth are clear, and attainable for developing countries:

(a) At least four prenatal care visits, as recommended by the World Health Organization;

(b) Access to skilled birth attendants who, with back-up emergency obstetric care, can reduce the maternal mortality rate by 75 per cent, according to the United Nations Population Fund, because they are trained to monitor pregnancy and childbirth, recognise and manage problems, and refer to higher levels when necessary;

(c) Minimally equipped birthing facilities that contain the essential medicines and equipment to treat and deal with the major complications of pregnancy;

(d) Health-care delivery system infrastructure, including education, which empowers women to make appropriate health decisions, and transportation, which enables women to reach birthing facilities in time.

As the global health community increases its focus on promoting contraception and legal abortion as "necessary" measures in combating maternal

mortality, the emphasis on these four achievable and effective interventions has declined. Funding and policy efforts have prioritised contraception and abortion, which fail to address the needs of pregnant women to have safe and healthy pregnancies and deliveries. A medical care system that cannot provide the four simple interventions listed above will be unable to provide appropriate medical counselling or safe surgery of any kind.

Demographic and health surveys conducted in developing countries reveal many women cannot determine when they are fertile; this ability is critical for avoiding unintended pregnancies and planning desired pregnancies. The surveys also indicate that women who use contraceptives or have been sterilised are not informed about potential side effects, what to do if they experience side effects, or about other methods of contraception. Women cannot exercise the informed choice required in family planning if they do not have this information. Further, the focus of unmet needs for family planning ignores the reasons why many women do not want to use contraceptives, including health concerns, side effects, and personal, religious or ethical beliefs.

To enjoy reproductive health and realise their right to freely and responsibly determine the number and spacing of their children, women need education that equips them to know their bodies. By understanding her cycle and how to observe and understand her own biomarkers, a woman is able to achieve optimum health and plan her family. She can become an active participant in her health care and can work with her care provider to achieve long-term health outcomes. Moreover, development programs will always be more effective if they arise from the communities themselves, and reflect local values and priorities, rather than having priorities imposed from afar.

Female foeticide

An important and under examined area in the promotion of women's rights is the protection of girls prior to birth. In some cultures, female sex selection is a reason to abort baby girls, due to family and cultural preferences for boys. This represents the most aggressive form of discrimination against women and girls present in the world today. Disturbingly, new research indicates that mothers and grandmothers often drive the preference for males; certainly they are participants in the decision to abort baby girls before birth, or abandon them afterwards, sometimes including infanticide. The numbers of missing baby girls are not insignificant; conservative estimates indicate that over 100 million baby girls are now missing from Asia, and these numbers are rising in other parts of the world as well. Such systemic, widespread violence against girls needs to be addressed at a global level in order to find solutions to make sure that girls are welcomed in every family and treated with the respect that the gift of their lives, talents and joy deserves.

Human and sexual trafficking

Particular attention should also be given to girls who are trafficked into intolerable work conditions, or sexual slavery. This is also done through the manipulation of families who love their girls, and who are ready to sacrifice in order to send them to cities and other countries for education and work experience. These families are cruelly deceived. Efforts must be made to courageously shut down trafficking rings wherever they are identified. This includes working to stigmatise

and punish individuals from western countries involved in the transportation, sale, and solicitation of services that these trafficking rings provide.

Women and development

The first strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action relate to women and poverty. As we approach not only Beijing+20 but also the Sustainable Development Goals post-2015 agenda, it is important to note the interrelation between poverty and other aspects of life where women typically are disadvantaged. Promoting female education provides one of the best ways of combating systems and practices that limit women and girls' ability to participate fully in their societies.

Poverty, undernourishment and unemployment are the main factors that prevent girls from finishing primary and secondary school. Lack of stability in some countries may force girls and women to either work or marry early. Cultural norms that see women and girls as a burden, educated and fed only to be given to another family through marriage, may also contribute to the difficulties girls face in securing the nutrition, education, and investment in skills needed to flourish. By improving the situation of girls living in poverty, deprived of nutrition, water and sanitation facilities, with no access to basic health care services, shelter, education, participation and protection, the dropout rates will be reduced. By eliminating school abandonment, girls will be empowered.

Educating boys and girls about equality and intrinsic dignity is necessary to lower girls' dropout rates and facilitate their participation in secondary and tertiary education. Respect for women's and girls' right to education starts at the earliest stages of life. Education to understand the intrinsic value of both women and men and to promote equal sharing of responsibilities should be encouraged. This education should focus on the inherent value of caregiving and other responsibilities, typically undertaken by women and girls, that promote human flourishing, interconnectedness, and form the basis for building strong families at the heart of society.

Conclusion

Humanity is its own greatest resource, but only when it involves all its members. Every person, woman or man, deserves a voice and to be respected. Each woman has unique qualities and gifts which can only be fully appreciated, fostered and utilized where human dignity is respected. By recognising women's innate dignity as human persons, we can empower women who will then transform their communities. The Beijing Platform for Action can only achieve its objectives by grounding its actions in understanding that human dignity is the basis for all true equality.

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Statement submitted by Yayasan Cinta Anak Bangsa, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

We believe, as stated on the Beijing Declaration and platform for action, the creation of an educational and social environment, in which women and men, girls and boys, are treated equally and encouraged to achieve their full potential, respecting their freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, and where educational resources promote non-stereotypical images of women and men, would be effective in the elimination of the causes of discrimination against women and inequalities between women and men.

We, too, are convinced that eradication of poverty based on sustained economic growth, social development, environmental protection and social justice requires the involvement of women in economic and social development, equal opportunities and the full and equal participation of women and men as agents and beneficiaries of people-centered sustainable development.

Yayasan Cinta Anak Bangsa was established in August 1999. It focuses on youth development and aims to enable underprivileged youth to be independent through education, entrepreneurship, and economic assistance. In the fifteen years of its existence, Yayasan Cinta Anak Bangsa has impacted more than 2.4 million people and focused to reach ten million by 2020. In 2012, Yayasan Cinta Anak Bangsa began to pilot several international programs in five countries, namely Afghanistan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Uganda.

According to the Central Body Statistic of the Republic of Indonesia, the number of people living in poverty in Indonesia is around 10.5 million people (as in March 2014) — around 5 per cent out of the total population in the country.

In developing countries, such as Indonesia, where women make up 50 per cent of the total population (according to the World Bank), we also believe that the productive capacity of women should be increased through access of credit to raise their income.

We believe that the empowerment of women is a critical factor in the eradication of poverty. Here at Yayasan Cinta Anak Bangsa, we always seek to reach out to empower women to get out of the poverty cycle through education, healthy lifestyle, and economic empowerment.

We aim to deliver a holistic youth development package where education and access to economy converge to enable true independence in a sustainable way. Our economic empowerment program tackles the objectives that the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action are working on.

The way we operate is by giving conditional micro loans where education attainment is the condition to loans given. Since 2010, we have been helping more than 28,539 women entrepreneurs by giving microloans that in return impacted the lives of more than 190,000 people.

To develop the fullest potential of girls and women of all ages, ensure their full and equal participation in building a better world for all, our microloans project has been proven to be effective. To date, Yayasan Cinta Anak Bangsa cooperative has disbursed more than 120,000 loans thus increasing beneficiaries' income from the average of US$1.8 to US$3 per day following a two year intervention and

bringing thousands of school dropouts back into education. Meanwhile, the repayment rate of our microloans is at 99 per cent.

We also strive to help our learning center's graduates to find employment after graduation and providing seed capital for selected Vocational Training graduates to start small businesses. Around 70.3 per cent of our graduates are working and 154 have received seed capital for their businesses.

To improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education, we believe in providing good education for underprivileged girls and boys and school dropouts hand in hand with economic empowerment. Currently, we have 60 learning centres spanning across 15 Indonesian provinces with 49,656 program attendees. Our education program offers affordable schooling at IDR 10,000/month (+- US$1 / month) per student for all programs, aimed at low income families who mainly live in poor urban areas. Basic education is provided along with digital inclusion and English literacy classes with certification from an esteemed university. This way, underprivileged women and girls (especially in the age of 17 to 24) may be given opportunity to continue their study and gain job skills.

Women also have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. The enjoyment of this right is vital to their well-being and their ability to participate in all areas of public and private life. We believe in focusing on addressing risky behaviour in girls and boys through healthy lifestyle promotion to take care of women and their physical and mental health. Our healthy Lifestyle Promotion program helps girls and women to make wise decisions. The program incorporates life skill training, life counselling, training of trainers, peer-to-peer outreach (ripple program), and mass campaign.

In cooperation with the government sector, we participate in the development of a comprehensive strategy for improving health so that girls and women of all ages living in poverty have better quality of life. Yayasan Cinta Anak Bangsa and the United States Department of State strive to increase the awareness of the dangers of drug abuse with the intention to reduce drug demand nationally in Indonesia.

In cooperation with private sectors, we participate in the development of a comprehensive strategy for improving health, education, and the economy so that girls and women of all ages living in poverty have full access to better living. An adoption of a poor urban areas where women and their families live by corporate partner(s) is being proposed to be worked on. This will enable us to improve the economy of the area and make it flourish, thus improving the welfare of the whole community and the surroundings.

Today's girl children are tomorrow's women. This generation of leaders must accept and promote a world in which every child is free from injustice, oppression and inequality and free to develop her own potential. The principle of holistic youth development program must therefore be integral to the process.

For more information about Yayasan Cinta Anak Bangsa, please visit our website: www.ycabfoundation.org.

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Statement submitted by Yayasan Pendidikan Indonesia, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

Empowering women and gender equality in education

Education is very important to empower people so that they can reach great achievements for the betterment of the nation. A number of studies have clearly illustrated that education has a profound impact on economic, social, and political life of a society. From the economic point of view, education creates educated people who acquire knowledge and skills needed in the process of development. Both knowledge and skills are a form of economic capital that plays an important role in promoting growth. Education produces human capital that is equipped with advanced competency and technology which are very supportive of economic development. Since education is critical for development, all countries are concerned about investing in human capital, and they believe that it has a great contribution to the country's progression.

Furthermore, educated people are aware of civil rights and political liberties. Those who have a high level of education can maximize their potential to achieve positive changes in their life and gain greater power for social and political transformation. In this sense, empowerment means that people are able to maintain the capacity to develop their talent and ability to reach a better life. It is also a way of enriching people with knowledge, skills, and information that are worthwhile to help them in dealing with many kinds of problems. Indeed, education creates knowledgeable and skilful people so they can generate a significant transformation in the context of individual and society.

Having considered the importance of education in promoting the quality of people's life, Indonesia is committed to providing opportunities for all citizens to have access to education, regardless of economic, social, and cultural background. This means that Indonesian people should have the right to go to school for learning. Therefore, all school-age children are entitled to education service; they should not be prevented from being enrolled in the school system. In this regard, education should be affordable for everyone and the government should take the responsibility to overcome any financial constraints — or, geographical obstacles for those who live in remote, isolated areas of the country — that impede children from going to school.

Indonesia has made a great deal of achievements in providing equal opportunity for all school-age children — both boys and girls — to get access to education. Equal access to education service reflects the fairness of treatment, allowing both females and males to enter schools without any difficulty and impediment. The Indonesian government has asserted that girls maintain the same chance as boys in gaining education service. This means that gender equality in education in the country prevails, since there is no discrimination in the realm of education on the basis of sexual category. It is believed that gender-based discrimination in education is against human rights, and it also creates deep-rooted disparity within society which is contradictory to the basic principles of equality in education. Indeed, Indonesia has taken into account the issue of gender equality in education, and it has also been integrated into the country's education system, which guarantees the proportion of males and females at all levels of education, from early childhood to higher education.

In the context of gender equality, providing females with quality education is particularly beneficial since it can break the cycle of poverty. Women with a high level of education will have a wide opportunity to get a good job with a good income, so that they are able to improve the quality of their lives. Educated women are likely to marry later and to have smaller and healthier families. They acknowledge the importance of health care and understand how to obtain it for the sake of their children and themselves. With knowledge and skills, women with good education have the capability to nurture their children and parent better, which results in the quality improvement of young populations. They are also more likely to send their children to school, and when all children have the same opportunity to access a quality education based on gender equality, it creates high quality of young generations in the future.

For the last ten years, Indonesia has achieved much progress in reducing gender disparity in education and literacy, and has also increased the participation of women in public sectors, especially in the world of the country's politics related to the legislative body. In order to examine gender ratios, we can apply an approach with the use of both net and gross enrolment ratios — NERs and GERs — of girls and boys. Here, using enrolment ratios reflects the actual differences between girls' and boys' school enrolment, and minimizes the influence of the gender structure in the school-age population.

The 2012 National Socio-Economic Surveys data show that NERs at primary school level for girls and boys reached at 99 per cent and 98 per cent respectively. The similar percentage also appeared at junior secondary school level showing that NERs for girls and boys were 74,4 per cent and 74,5 per cent correspondingly. Meanwhile, GERs at senior secondary school for those sexual categories were 68,5 per cent and 67,9 per cent respectively. This data indicates that there is no bias towards males in regard to access to education. Likewise, literacy rate of population aged 15-24 years for males and females was exactly the same, standing at 98,8 per cent each. Nevertheless, when it comes to senior secondary and tertiary levels, school-age populations, especially for females by region, face some difficulties in attaining education. There are various factors that inhibit girls to get access to senior secondary education, which include the unavailability of and distances to schools. Moreover, older girls very often discontinue their education due to early marriage. But, there is a tendency that at the tertiary level the female-to-male ratio in enrolment has increased from year to year as seen in Study Report by The World Bank and the Ministry of Education and Culture (2013).

However, there is an issue of gender stereotyping. This issue still prevails in Indonesia as seen in the specialization selected by both female and male students at vocational schools and universities. While female students are conventionally associated with social sciences, such as nursing, child development, public health, dentistry, and education; male students are mostly concentrated in technical sciences, such as civil engineering, electrical engineering, agriculture, and forestry. This kind of gender segregation related to subject fields is the result of socio-cultural values and beliefs that shape views and attitudes of Indonesian society. It is believed that the family's economy is traditionally under the men's responsibility and women are in charge of domestic affairs, allowing them to stay at or work from home. As gender stereotypes occur in choosing subject fields at schools and universities, so do in developing carrier paths for males and females.

Here, females are very often advised not to take career opportunities which are traditionally perceived as the male domain occupation.

Since gender stereotyping is deeply rooted in the culture of the society, it needs some time to alter this sort of cultural beliefs. Despite the fact that gender stereotypes prevail, empowering women through education is a must, and the Indonesian government maintains the very strong commitment to improving the access and quality of education for both males and females. Such quality education is obviously essential to paving the way, especially for females, to have a great opportunity to take part in public sectors. Educated women maximize their ability and aptitude to contribute to, participate in, and benefit from economic, social, cultural, and political activities. Indeed, education is the most effective means for empowering women; and gender equality in education must therefore be taken into consideration in the policy making process.

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Statement submitted by Young Professionals Forum, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

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Statement

Young Professionals Forum has analysed the priority of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women Session March 2015 — Theme "The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, including current challenges that Affects its Implementation".

Young Professionals Forum believes that "The Beijing Platform for Action" calls upon governments, the international community and civil society, including the private sector, to empower women and girls by taking action in 12 critical areas: poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, the economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights, the media, the environment and the girl child.

This is a powerful declaration that has faced different implementation challenges; a good example that shows the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action has not met its expectations is, among others, the constant fight against the girl child education in developing countries, most government structures and corporations still being represented by men, and the number of women living in poverty has increased in all regions due to the outbreak of different viral diseases.

This is a burden to women who are most especially the key caregivers to children, the sick, and the elderly. This has caused women to experience unemployment, underemployment.

Young Professionals Forum calls for governments, the international community and civil society, including the private sector, to remap its strategies, create programs that will benefit women's advancement, poverty alleviation, education, and empowerment. Doing this will help overcome the challenges of implementing the Beijing Platform for Action Priority themes.

The twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on Women 2000: the first five year assessment conducted after the adoption, also included the current challenges that affect the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Young Professionals Forum calls for a strong commitment on the part of Governments, international organizations and institutions at all levels, and other stakeholders in fighting to remove the challenges of the Beijing Platform for Action including violence against women, which is still on the rise, negative stereotypes, gender equity and other laws and policies that affect them.

Young Professionals Forum reaffirms that current challenges of the Beijing Platform for Action will require a proper analysis and development of strategic objectives and action plans of possible solutions that will help to achieve the ultimate goal, which is the successful implementation of The Beijing Platform for Action by the Governments and other stakeholders. In doing this, Government should tap the rich assets that are present in academia, professional associations, international & local Non-Government Organizations.

The Young Professionals Forum reaffirms that on the national level government has a major responsibility and also takes a leading role in the implementation and success of the decelerations, in order to overcome the challenges of The Beijing Platform for Action.

The General Assembly of the United Nations at its fiftieth session endorsed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as adopted by the Conference "BEIJING DECLARATION" in Beijing in September 1995.

The Young Professionals Forum considers it very essential for United Nations General Assembly to urge and reaffirm a strong commitment on the part of Governments, international organizations and institutions at all levels to uphold the Millennium Development Goals in order to provide empowerment and the advancement of women.

The Young Professionals Forum proposes the establishment of global collaboration among governments and other stakeholders based on a spirit of partnership, fairness, and gender sensitive policy making. This will help to foster the successful implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls.